

February 13, 2022

RE: Department of Education's Legislative Agenda

Dear Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Representative Gilchrest, and Honorable Members of the Appropriations Committee,

We are West Hartford residents, and proud parents of Harvey Kamola (4th grade) and Callia Laws (2nd grade), who attend University of Hartford Magnet School. UHMS is an amazing school that has offered our children a supportive, diverse, and enriching education. We are writing to encourage you to support an increase in the RESC state magnet grant to secure this quality education.

CREC schools have provided our kids with an extraordinary education, that is both academically strong but also develops deep interpersonal relationships among students of incredibly diverse backgrounds. Having both grown up in segregated and majority white towns, when we moved to Connecticut, we wanted to provide our children with the opportunity to attend integrated schools. In contrast to our own experiences, Harvey and Callie have made many close friends who are African American and Indian American, and with families that come from Brazil, Ghana, and Jamaica. Having friends from all kinds of backgrounds, including socio-economic, is completely natural for them. And the kinds of conversations we are able to have as a family about race and racism in America, and about the need for a more just and equitable society, are all the more possible because they attend schools where those values are practiced every day. Not only in words, but in practice. And in material support from the state.

As we have seen during the struggles for racial justice over the past few years, our society is being called upon to do the hard (and expensive) work of dismantling educational segregation and prioritizing investments in the intentional construction of inclusive schools. We are thankful that, in Connecticut, those institutions already exist in the CREC system.

However, these opportunities are currently in jeopardy. Our neighbors who send their kids to West Hartford public schools, for example, already have greater opportunities for their children to participate in sports, theater programs, music, and other extracurricular activities. Without sustainable funding, CREC--which operates 16 innovative schools--will be forced to either cut programming or to increase the tuition costs they charge to local school districts. Such additional cuts would greatly influence whether we could continue to send Harvey and Callie to CREC schools.

I am asking the legislature to follow through on its promise to invest in the future of all students. Magnet schools have a successful track record of providing their students a chance to thrive. Currently the Sheff Stipulated Agreement requires the expansion of schools and program, before you add any more schools, please adequately fund those that you have established and that are thriving. I urge you to continue funding the schools that are already operating and available and have demonstrated success before you consider funding new school choice options.

Thank you for your consideration. And if you have any additional questions for us, please do not hesitate to contact us.

All the best,

Isaac Kamola
Serena Laws
138 N. Main St
West Hartford, CT 06107

ikamola@trincoll.edu